

THE DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT

J. E. OLDROYD, M.A.

With Preface by
CANON BODDY

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THE DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT

CHIEFLY
AS SET FORTH IN THE
EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

BY THE
REV. J. B. OLDROYD, M.A.
DURHAM

VICAR OF BRANTINGHAM, E. YORKS

PREFACE BY THE
REV. CANON G. BODY, M.A.

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PREFACE

I HAVE been asked to send this book on its way with some words of commendation. I most readily do so, not only because of an affectionate regard for its writer, but because I believe it will be helpful to many who read it.

In the revelation of the Truth as it is in Jesus, as given us in the New Testament, the Epistle to the Hebrews occupies, as it seems to me, a position of special prominence. I believe that the aspect in which it presents that Truth is the one which it is of special importance to recognise in the present day. Its theme is the eternal Priesthood of the Lord, its continuous ministries in the Church, "the True Tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man,"—its relation with His Incarnation, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension. And in this recognition lies the solution of many controversies and the teaching of the full Evangelicalism of the Church's Faith.

I believe that this book will materially help

to the true understanding of this Epistle, and I gladly avail myself of this opportunity of expressing this conviction.

GEORGE BODY.

THE COLLEGE, DURHAM,
7th December 1909.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

IT is hoped that the following pages may supply the felt want of some popular manual for devotional or Lenten reading, which shall not be too long, or too difficult, but which shall meet and satisfy some of the doubts and difficulties with which thinking minds are apt to be troubled in dealing with this great subject.

J. B. O.

BRANTINGHAM,
30th November 1909.

ERRATA.

Page 18, line 4, Himself should be himself.

„ 33, „ 14, *for* self-insufficiency, *read* self-sufficiency.

„ 35, „ 3, *for* generations, *read* generation.

„ 65, „ 5, *for* token, *read* tokens.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT

I

IT has been said that "Christianity differs from heathenism in its clear perception of the Antagonism which sin has introduced between God and man."¹ And this Antagonism being but vaguely perceived by heathenism, it follows as a consequence that the idea of Atonement for sin which accompanies it is vague and ill-defined also. And yet the universal prevalence of Sacrifice in all heathen religions is a witness to the universality of belief in the necessity of Atonement in some form or other.² Sacrifice may, indeed, be regarded independently of sin as

¹ *Chambers' Encyclopædia*, art. "Atonement."

² Cf. *Lux Mundi*, p. 279.

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a tribute due to God's sovereignty, and a love answering to His love. Submission, love, reverence are the original and natural feelings of man's heart towards God, and such feelings sacrifice is well calculated to express; but the advent of sin introduced a new element, and sacrifice becomes henceforth associated with the idea of propitiating the Divine wrath against the sinner, of expiating his sin, and of winning once more the Divine favour. And while the original idea of the homage due to God's sovereignty remains, the new idea of Atonement is henceforth associated with it, and is prominent in it. And this twofold idea of Sacrifice is that which is embodied in the Mosaic system, namely, that Sacrifice is needed to expiate guilt, and to bring about the restoration of communion with God.

Thus Judaism comes in as a link, or stepping-stone, between heathenism and Christianity. It reveals a personal God, with whom the Jew stands in personal relationship within the terms of a Covenant,

but whose written law exhibits requirements which he is not able to fulfil, and which makes him conscious of an ever-widening breach between himself and his Maker. Thus "by the Law is the knowledge of Sin" (Rom. iii. 21), and the corresponding desire for Atonement: a desire which it can never satisfy. And yet the sacrificial system of the Jews, being of Divine appointment, pointed to the hope of its fulfilment.

It has thus been well said, that "Heathenism is the seeking religion, Judaism the hoping religion, and Christianity is the religion of fruition."¹ In other words, that what Heathenism sought, and Judaism hoped for, Christianity has found, namely: the sin-atonement Sacrifice.

Now the law of Judaism, as contained in the O.T. Scriptures, exhibits a system of Atonement (however imperfect and incomplete) by vicarious sacrifice. And the law of Christianity, as exhibited in the N.T., sets forth "The Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world" (John i. 29), in the

¹ Luthardt, *Saving Truths*, p. 20.

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person of the Son of God, who is given, and gives Himself, for the salvation of men (John iii. 16). And the conditions of this salvation, as there set forth, are, on the part of man, repentance, faith, and reformation of life; and, on the part of God, the life of Christ upon earth, closed by His death upon the Cross, as the price of our redemption and the means of eternal life to men (1 Pet. i. 18, 19).

And in accordance with this, it is the full and explicit teaching of Holy Scripture that the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ are to be regarded as of primary and essential importance in the work of our redemption. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. iii. 11).

Nevertheless we look in vain for anything like a systematic treatment of the doctrine of the Atonement in the Holy Scriptures. And yet the doctrine of the Atonement by Jesus Christ is everywhere taken for granted in the N.T.—(as already received and believed by those to whom the N.T.

Scriptures were addressed)—although it is nowhere systematically developed.

The nearest approach to any systematic treatment is probably to be found in the underlying argument of the Epistle to the Hebrews. It is not the direct purpose of the Epistle to set forth this doctrine, but it is inevitably bound up with the object in view. That Epistle is addressed to those who had been brought up under the Mosaic system and were familiar with its requirements and ceremonial. And the object of the writer is to show the temporary and preparatory character of Judaism, which always looked forward to and anticipated a more perfect religion; and to show that Christianity is that more perfect religion, in which is to be found the satisfaction of all which the devout Jew desired and hoped for.

A brief analysis of the contents of the Epistle will show this.

The superiority of Christianity over Judaism is shown (1) in respect of its minister or introducer. Former revelations

were made through God's prophets, this through God's Son, who is superior to angels (chaps. i. and ii.), to Moses (iii. and iv.), to Aaron (v. 1. to x. 18). (2) In expanding the latter clause with reference to the Priesthood, the writer shows that the older Covenant was imperfect in respect of its access to God, and its purification of the conscience (ix. 1-14). (3) Christ satisfies both these needs (ix. 11-14). He is the mediator of the New Covenant, and His sacrifice of Himself is the one Sacrifice of Ps. xl. 6-8, which supersedes the sacrifices of the Jewish law, and effects what they only sought after,—thus rendering all further sacrifice superfluous (ix. 15 to x. 18).

We need not pursue the analysis further : let us look at the argument thus set forward in further detail, so far as it bears upon our subject.

The writer begins by setting forth the superiority of the Son of God over the angels. This, he says, is not by right of favour, but of inheritance. He is the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image

of His Person. He is, by derivation of being, all that the Father is, and the absolute expression of the character of God to angels and to men. In Him God is revealed.

And to Him, and not to the angels, the Father has put in subjection the world to come. But at the present time we see not all things put under Him ; but we see Jesus (this Son of God) made lower than the angels, by taking upon Him the nature of men, for the suffering of death,—that He, by the grace (or favour) of God, might taste death for every man (ii. 9).

Here the doctrine of the Atonement is, for the first time, touched upon, and that not by way of theory, but as a statement of facts.

It was on man's account ; it was "for every man," because of every man's need. And the manner of it was "by the suffering of death,"—by "tasting death," and "through suffering" (ii. 9, 10).

Futhermore, for the accomplishing of this work it was necessary that "both He that

sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, should be all one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them (*i.e.* the men whom He redeems) brethren."

And the way in which His oneness with them was brought about was by His taking flesh and blood (*i.e.* human nature). "Forasmuch as the children (whom He redeemed) are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same" (ii. 14). "For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels" (as though His purpose had been to redeem *them*), "but He took on Him the seed of Abraham" (ii. 16). And His purpose was, that being made in all things like unto His brethren, He might be to them a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people (ii. 17).

Here we have various points of importance, and of no little controversy, brought before us, which it may be well to discuss.

(1) It was on man's account, and to bring him to glory, that the Son of God under-

took the work of redemption by suffering and death. Man's condition after the fall of Adam (which, by the unity of the race in him, was the fall of the race), was such that he had no power of recovery in himself—no power to help himself. His condition was as hopeless as that of the fallen angels. They, too (the creatures of a prior creation), had fallen from their first estate (Jude 6). And once fallen, they were fallen for ever, and without hope of recovery. The condition of man, after his fall, was no less hopeless; but (for reasons which we cannot fathom) it pleased God of His grace and mercy to choose men unto salvation and to provide a Saviour for them, while He left the angels still in their lost condition. Neither angels nor men had in themselves any power of recovery; and without external help each would assuredly perish everlastingly.

On man's behalf this help was found; and it was found in God's gift of His only-begotten Son to men, "that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but

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have everlasting life" (John iii. 16). And this is the Gospel of our salvation; the Gospel of God's love to sinners; that which gives them hope of everlasting life through Jesus Christ. "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved" (John iii. 17). "For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham" (Heb. ii. 16).

(2) The way of this Redemption was by suffering and death. It has been often argued whether the Redemption of the world by the Cross and Passion of Jesus Christ was the only possible redemption. On the one hand it is argued that sin is such a giant evil that nothing short of a Divine Sacrifice could have delivered from it. On the other hand it has been asserted that so priceless was that which St. Peter calls "the Precious Blood of Christ" (1 Pet. i. 19), that one drop of it was more than an equivalent for a world's ransom.

The whole mystery of Redemption is,

indeed, too deep for us to fathom; and whether God was able by any other means to accomplish His will in the redemption of mankind, it may be impossible exactly to determine; nor does it concern us very much to know. What the author of our Epistle contributes to our knowledge of this subject is,—*not* that no other method was possible, but that the method chosen was a right and suitable method, and therefore (by implication) the best method for the purposes in view. Twice, in this Epistle, he makes the assertion that it was “becoming,” both to God and man, to do it in this way. “For *it became Him*, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through suffering” (ii. 10). And again, “For such an High Priest *became us*” (vii. 26).

And although the Gospel tells us that Satan offered to Jesus Christ in the wilderness “the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them,” in return for an act of homage rendered to himself (which suggests that an alternative method might possibly have been

found), yet we see that offer refused on the one hand, and the way of the Cross chosen on the other, which shows us that no other way was in accordance with the Divine will; and that the way chosen was the best and most suitable to the circumstances and to the desired end.

(3) Arising out of the last question is the further question, Had man never sinned would God have become Incarnate?

On the one hand we are told that it was God's eternal purpose "to bring many sons unto glory" (ii. 10). And on the other we cannot think that the fall of man was a necessary preliminary to this glorification; else should we make God the author of sin. For while we must admit that God foresaw the fall of man (and yet did not forbear to create), we do not thereby admit that God became in consequence responsible for man's sin. All that we admit is that the advent of sin did not turn God aside from His original purpose; but that having predestined us to eternal life through Jesus Christ, from the foundation of the world

(Eph. i. 3-14), He still found the means of accomplishing His will. The difference that the entrance of sin made is to be found, probably, in the difference of method by which the end was now to be reached. What might have been attained by other and less trying means, had man not sinned, could now, it would seem, only be accomplished by "the suffering of death" (ii. 9). Thus it is part of our subject to consider it.

The cup of suffering, the Cross and Passion, were added features, necessitated by the altered conditions which sin had introduced. And while He took on Him, not the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham, that He might have a body which He could make an offering for our sins (x. 10), this does not preclude the possibility of the Incarnation for other purposes than those of suffering. Indeed, when we consider Jesus as the "Eternal Word,"—the revelation of the Father to all created beings, and the archetype in whose image man was originally created, we can only conceive that, in the fulness of time, He must have

made Himself known to men in human nature, not only as the perfect realisation of God to man, but also as the realisation of man to Himself. Thus we may conceive that God's original purpose for man's advancement included this (apart from any question of the Fall), when "He took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham" (ii. 16).

II

THE second division of the Epistle brings us to the consideration of the superiority of Jesus Christ over Moses as a *Mediator*. This question is also intimately bound up with our subject.

(1) The distance which separates between God and His creatures is one that only God Himself could bridge over. The heart of man is made for God, and ever turns to Him. The language of Job, "O that I knew where I might find Him; that I might come even to His seat" (Job xxiii. 3), is the natural cry of the human heart. But no man hath seen God at any time, neither can he by searching find Him. But God has been pleased to reveal Himself, and this revelation is by the Incarnate Word,—the Son of God made man. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten

Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John i. 18). Jesus Christ is, therefore, by His unique relationship to God on the one hand, and to man on the other, fitted to be the Mediator or Daysman to bring both together. And He is the only complete Mediator that can be imagined. And His mediation is as necessary for sinless as for sinful creatures. It is the truth which underlies the revelation of Jesus Christ as "the Word of God." And it was probably the rebellion against this revelation which brought about the fall of the angels. So that when Christ says, "I am the way; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me" (John xiv. 6), He speaks eternal truth, which applies to men (and to angels) whether in a sinless or a fallen state.¹

But when sin has once entered in, the need of this mediation is still further increased. Man now feels that the distance which separates between him and God is infinitely widened, and no efforts of his own

¹ Hooker, Book I., chap. v.

can bridge it over. Sin is a state of alienation and exile from God. Man is no longer fit to appear before the presence of God. It is the teaching of the Bible from the first page to the last. Yet man is ever seeking to return. He longs for one to plead his cause before God, and stand in his name as his representative. And the Divine Word, by the assumption of our manhood and by human birth, has become the ideal representative of man, as by Divine generation He is the perfect representative of God. Thus in His twofold relationship, as Son of God and Son of man, He has brought God and man together in His own person, and is the natural and fitting "Mediator between God and man, being both God and man."¹ Moses had already partially filled the office of mediator between God and Israel. He had received the law from God to give to the people, and he had stood for the people before God, in confessing their sins and pleading for them. And though he offered to take upon himself the sins of the people,

¹ Article vii.

and to bear the penalty, he was not permitted (Ex. xxxii. 32). And if Moses was faithful in all his house, so also was Jesus (iii. 2). And whether we consider Him as the *revealer* of God's will, or as an *advocate* with the Father, or as one who *bears the sins* of others, He was in all points superior to Moses. As a revealer He was unique; for "no man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him" (Luke x. 22). As an intercessor we find Him pleading "for those whom Thou hast given Me" (John xvii. 9). And as bearing the sins of others, we find Him doing in His own person what Moses had only done by God's command through a substitute. "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man (Himself) be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John iii. 14, 15).

And Moses verily was faithful as a servant, but Christ as a Son (iii. 5, 6). "For the Son can do nothing of Himself,

but what He seeth the Father do" (John v. 19). And "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me" (John v. 30). He was, therefore, as a Mediator, in all points superior to Moses.

(2) The fitness of Jesus for the office of Mediator (which runs up into that of High Priest) of the human race is further demonstrated by His knowledge of our infirmities, by His submission to our temptations, and by the sinlessness and perfection of His human nature throughout (iv. 15).

(a) The sinlessness of Jesus was necessary to His office as Mediator. If sin was that which caused the estrangement between God and man, then He who would reconcile them again must be Himself "separate from sinners" (vii. 26). He who would be a perfect Mediator, must Himself be able to stand before God without condemnation. He who would recommend others before God must be Himself acceptable with God. And "He came to be the Lamb without spot, who by sacrifice of Himself once made, should take away the sins of the world; and

sin, as St. John saith, was not in Him.”¹ And this sinlessness of the Mediator had been foreshadowed in the Mosaic ritual by the purification and cleansing which was required of those who were appointed to the office of Mediator, like Moses, or of Priest, like Aaron, under the Law. Moses might not draw near to God to receive the Law at His mouth to give it to the people, without the forty days of preparation and separation in the mount. Aaron and his sons might not exercise the office of Priesthood in the Tabernacle, without a general consecration and setting apart by God, and without particular ablutions, washings, and fastings upon each special exercise of the priestly office. And none had yet been found of human mould who satisfied the Divine standard. One generation had followed another since the first fall, and none had been found without fault. “All had sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. iii. 23). Some had been better than others, but none had been perfect; till Christ

¹ Article xv.

came to be the true ideal of restored manhood — the second Adam. In Him the perfect man was seen, and out of the very heart of sinful humanity came One upon whom the eye of God could once more rest with perfect satisfaction. “Thou art My beloved Son ; in Thee I am well pleased” (Luke iii. 22).

The perfect *life* of Jesus was therefore no less necessary as a part of our redemption than His atoning *death*. It was necessary, not only as a preliminary to His dying, and to qualify Him for His atoning work, but it had a certain value of its own, as standing “for us”—as our surety—His righteousness atoning for our unrighteousness and making satisfaction on our behalf. And thus it is that the Church teaches us to pray—“By the mystery of Thy holy Incarnation ; by Thy holy Nativity and Circumcision ; by Thy Baptism, Fasting, and Temptation” ; as well as “By Thine Agony and bloody Sweat ; by Thy Cross and Passion ; by Thy precious Death and Burial, good Lord deliver us.”

(b) And since Christ took upon Him at His Incarnation all that belongs to the reality of man's nature, and subjected Himself thereby to all the conditions of human life, it follows as a necessity that He became subject to temptation. Since temptation is "common to man" (1 Cor. x. 13), Jesus could not be truly man if He were not subject to the like temptations and trials as others. "Tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin" (iv. 15). He could not have been the second Adam if His life had not been subject to the same conditions as the first Adam. And although he could not fall, because of His Divine personality, yet He could be tempted because of His human nature. Indeed, to say that our blessed Lord could be tempted, does not express the whole truth; He had greater susceptibility to temptation than any other human being. In Him human nature was perfect; in Him the deadening effects of sin upon the sensitiveness both of soul and body were absent. His sensitiveness to the pains which afflict the body was unique;

His horror at the approach of sin, in the person of the Tempter, and at the approach of death as the consequence of sin, was without parallel. He knew, as none other knew, the evil which sin had wrought in the world; yet He suffered Himself to be tempted. The first Adam in his innocence had only to exercise self-restraint in order to preserve his innocence; it was at no cost of suffering. Jesus "learned obedience by the things which He suffered" (v. 8). Not only was self-denial required of Him, but His path of obedience was everywhere girt with pain. We may say that the obedience of the first Adam was made as easy as possible: the obedience of the second Adam as difficult as possible. His was the way of the Cross, from first to last. Was it no hardship, no trial, no temptation to be born in a stable, of a poor mother, and to be deprived of all the advantages which birth and station confer? Who that is poor, and knows the hardships which poverty entails, would not cast off those hardships and privations if he could? Yet

Jesus voluntarily chose this position when He might have had it otherwise. It was a voluntary humility indeed, and humility is not easy to flesh and blood; it was therefore a trial and temptation to Him. For not only might He have had a different position to start with, but at any moment He might have altered His position had He chosen to do so. Most of us have no choice in the matter. We must take up the position assigned us in the Providence of God, and however much we may wish it, we have, for the most part, no power of altering it. Jesus had the power of escape at any moment if He would. Yet, that He might be able to sympathise with the tried and tempted, and might know by experience what their burdens were, "He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows." He chose the *hardest* lot in life, that He might be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," and was "in all points tempted like as we are." And this applied to His whole life—to infancy, childhood, and manhood; till at last, pressed both in body and soul—and

with obedience tested to the utmost point to which obedience could be carried—even to the destruction of the body, which up to this time had known (so far as is told us) no sickness, or consequent weakness—He was brought down in a few short hours, by the weight of His sufferings, into the dust of death.

Surely no martyr ever suffered as He did, for none had His capacity for suffering or His power to escape from it : none therefore had to bend his will so unswervingly throughout to do the will of God. For at any moment, we have to remember, He might have foregone the struggle and come down from the Cross. At any moment He had the power to deliver Himself. And when the taunt went up against Him, "If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the Cross, and we will believe Thee" (Mark xv. 32), it was not the power but the will that was lacking. At any moment He could have set Himself free, and therefore at every moment He had to resist the temptation ; moment by moment He had to hold Him-

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self to the Cross in voluntary submission to the Divine purpose, that in this way (by suffering and death) He was to redeem the world. So did He "learn obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect, became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him" (v. 8, 9).

III

JESUS CHRIST, in His office of High Priest towards all mankind, is the High Priest of the New Covenant, as Aaron was of the old; yet the priesthood of Jesus Christ is superior to that of Aaron, inasmuch as it is "after the order of Melchisedec" (v. 10). It was one of the promises of God, confirmed by an oath—as declared by their own Scriptures in a Psalm which was acknowledged by the Jews to be of Messianic character (Matt. xxii. 41-46), that the Messiah should be a priest after this ancient order, "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec" (Ps. cx. 4).

The nature of priesthood is briefly set forth (v. 1) as a Divine ordinance in which men are set apart, on behalf of their fellow-

men, to offer to God both gifts and sacrifices for sins.

And the qualifications for this office are stated to be (1) the power of sympathy towards those on whose behalf the ministry is to be exercised (v. 2); and (2) divine appointment to the office (v. 4).

(a) The first of these qualifications was possessed by our Lord Jesus Christ in an eminent degree, on the ground of His unique position as Son of man, *i.e.* as summing up in His own person the totality of our human nature. For He is not simply the representative of one type, or race, or class,—whether Jew or Greek, whether male or female,—but the perfect embodiment and sum-total of all; so that what is fragmentary in others, is whole and perfect in Him. And this is the meaning of the Article in the Creed which says, that the Incarnation was the “taking of the manhood (or whole human nature) into God.” And the consequence is, that He who is so endowed is uniquely fitted to be the High Priest of humanity; for “we have not an high priest who cannot

be touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (iv. 15); but we have one who was eminently fitted to "have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way: for that He Himself also is compassed with infirmity" (v. 2), "yet without sin" (iv. 15).

Now it might be thought that some other, who was less perfect, and who had some experience (however small) of what sin is, would be better fitted to sympathise and to exercise the ministry of priesthood on our behalf than He. But here, one who was conscious of *infirmity* indeed (*i.e.* of weakness and want of self-insufficiency, and therefore was capable of temptation, although He had maintained His integrity under every trial), is set forth as the *more able* on that account to show sympathy with His less faithful brethren. And is it not so? Who is it can best sympathise with the fallen, and stretch out the hand which is to raise them again? Is it the one who has himself fallen, and knows, from the depth of his own misery, what sin is? or is it the one who, conscious only of *infirmity*, is yet unfallen in that

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particular sense? The experience of life proves that it is the latter who can have the truest compassion, and who can offer the most effectual help ; and it is to the latter, rather than to the companion in sin, that the fallen will ever turn in the hour of penitence and need. Even so Jesus, who was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin, has ever been the sinner's refuge.

“Hide me in Thy dear heart,
For thither would I flee.”

“Rock of Ages ! cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.”

(b) The second qualification for Priesthood consists in “the Divine appointment to the office.” The writer to the Hebrews says that “Christ glorified not Himself to be made an high priest ; but He that said unto Him, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee” (v. 5) And in the first chapter this Sonship of Christ is spoken of as part of the eternal inheritance, which makes Him higher than the angels (i. 5). Thus the saying, “Thou art My Son, this

day have I begotten Thee," can only be understood in this place (v. 5) of the eternal generations of the Son, who was "begotten of the Father, before all the worlds."¹ The Priesthood was therefore part of the eternal inheritance of Christ, to which He was set apart and dedicated before the foundation of the world. And this is confirmed, in that it is said also, "Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec" (v. 6).

Now, in what the superiority and unique character of the priesthood of Melchisedec consisted is shown fully in chap. vii.; but before passing to the subject the writer refers to further "discipline of suffering" by which our High Priest was made perfect for His redeeming work. And the special incident in our blessed Lord's life which is chosen to illustrate this, is the incident in the garden of Gethsemane, when "in the days of His flesh He offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from

¹ Nicene Creed.

death" (v. 7-10); though these words may apply to other like occasions also.

But the connection between Gethsemane and Calvary is very intimate and real. It was in Gethsemane that the final struggle of the will in its repugnance to death took place, and the voluntary submission to that which the Father had chosen was fully settled. "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt," is the explanation of it. And from this point there was no looking back, no further struggle against the bitterness of death. "The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" (John xviii. 2). And it was this yielding of the human will to the Divine will, upon which our author lays so much stress, as constituting the death of Christ a voluntary sacrifice acceptable to the Father, and effectual for the world's ransom. "By the which will we are sanctified, by the offering of Jesus Christ once for all" (x. 10).

And it was by such testing of the will that He "learned obedience by the things which He suffered: and being made perfect, He

became the author of Eternal Salvation unto all them that obey Him " (v. 8, 9).

Yet we are not to understand, by the expression in ver. 9, that our blessed Lord was ever anything else than perfect ; but that by a progressive development He was more perfect at the end than at the beginning. Perfect as a child, perfect as a youth, perfect as a man, with the perfection which belonged to the several stages of human life through which He passed, it was not till the end that He was perfect as a Saviour, with that perfection which was needed by Him who was to be at the same time the great sin-offering for the sins of men, and the great High Priest who was to make the offering.

And this perfection was only reached by the way of sorrows—the "*via dolorosa*" of His Passion. " Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God ; I am content to do it ; yea, Thy law is within my heart " (Ps. xl. 7, 8).

(c) We must now consider briefly the superiority of the priesthood of Melchisedec (the universal and royal priesthood which

foreshadows that of Christ) over that of Aaron, as set forth in chap. vii.

In the Genesis account of Melchisedec nothing is said of his descent, or of his death. He there stands forth as a type of one who has neither beginning of days, nor end of life; and thus stands contrasted with the priests of the Levitical order, whose descent was known, and who died, and were succeeded by others. "And this man (Jesus) because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood,"—a priesthood which does not pass from Him to others; and is thus "a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec." Also, in blessing Abraham and receiving tithes from him, Melchisedec was superior to Abraham, and therefore to Levi and to Aaron, who were yet in the loins of their father. And the bringing in of a new priesthood (which was not of the order of Aaron, but of Melchisedec), was significant. It implied the bringing in of a new religious system, and the passing away of the old. "For the priesthood being changed, there is of necessity a change also of the law"

(vii. 12). And of this new religious system Christ is the Priest;—a Priest not after the order of Aaron, but of Melchisedec. And it is in virtue of His unchanging priesthood that He exercises in heaven now a perpetual ministry of intercession (based upon His own sacrifice of Himself which needs never to be repeated), and is thus “able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him” (vii. 24–27). “Seeing then that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly (with confidence) unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (iv. 14–16).

IV.

THE writer to the Hebrews, having now discussed all preliminaries, and made sure his foundations,—having shown what is necessary to a perfect *sacrifice*, and to the perfect *ministry* which is to offer and present the sacrifice,—may now be said to have reached the climax of his argument ; and it only remains for him to sum up and apply what he has already established. He has shown us that in the O.T., and in the system of Sacrifice there divinely appointed, we have the fullest outline of the doctrine of the Atonement. It is a revelation to us of the mind and purpose of God. It makēs known to us the separating power of sin,—the need of expiation of its guilt, and the need of restoration of communion with God ; and it shows us *sacrifice* as the appointed means by which these ends are to be attained. But at

the same time it shows us that the sacrifices appointed under the law of Moses were so partial and imperfect, that of necessity they cried out for something better,—something more perfect, more complete, more satisfying to the conscience, more abiding in their efficiency; and this something is to be found in the sacrifice of Christ. “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins” (x. 4). Why is it not possible? Because such sacrifices were lacking in the essential features of true sacrifice.

(a) They were insufficient as a propitiation.

(b) They were involuntary on the part of the sufferer.

(c) The connection between the offering and those for whom it was made was artificial and arbitrary, not essential and organic, such as the conscience demands.

Nevertheless, such sacrifices, although imperfect and proclaiming their own insufficiency, were not without their use for the time then present, until the purpose of God in

appointing them could be manifested in their fulfilment. For although such sacrifices could never, of their own intrinsic worth, take away or atone for sin, yet they were *effectual* (because of that for which they stood, and which was ever behind them as present to the Divine mind, namely, the Sacrifice of the Cross) for the obtaining of the pardon and forgiveness of those offences for which they were divinely appointed. Such offences were chiefly of a ceremonial character, such as contact with the dead, or with leprosy ; for it does not appear that any sacrifices were appointed for the grosser breaches of the moral law ; and the penalty attaching to such ceremonial offences was exclusion from the Sanctuary and from the congregation. By the offering of the appointed sacrifice this penalty was removed, and the sinner was restored to God's presence and favour, and allowed to take his place again amongst God's people ; for by his offering he expressed his penitence, he acknowledged the righteousness of God's law, and sought for restoration to God's favour. He was therefore ac-

cepted according to the terms of the Covenant; and sacrifice was the appointed means to these ends. The writer to the Hebrews acknowledges this when he says, "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb. ix. 13, 14).

Therefore, when he says later on, "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (x. 4), we see that we must understand the words not absolutely, but according to the limitation that he has already laid down. And when he draws the comparison between the sacrifices of the Law, and the Sacrifice of Christ, it is for the purpose of showing the unprofitableness of the one in comparison with the other. For "when He (Christ) cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast

Thou prepared Me : in burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me,) to do Thy will, O God. Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt-offerings and offering for sin Thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein ; which are offered by the Law. Then said He, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second" (Heb. x. 5-9).

Thus the Sacrifice of Christ is pointed to as supplying that which was lacking in the sacrifices of the Law, and as the realisation of that which they only foreshadowed and hoped for. For the Sacrifice of Christ was strong in the very points in which the Jewish sacrifices were weak.

(a) The death of Christ was a real and sufficient propitiation and satisfaction for the sins of men. In the words of the O.T., "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" ; and "the chastisement of our peace was upon Him" (Isa. liii. 3-5).

In the words in the N.T., "He is the

propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world" (1 John ii. 2). "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sins" (1 John i. 7). "Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. xv. 3). "Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the Atonement" (Rom. v. 11). And His own words, "This is my Blood of the New Covenant, which is being shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. xxvi. 28).

"The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. xx. 28). And in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many" (ix. 28). And again, "The offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (x. 10); and many others.

It would thus appear that the Church's statement in the Communion Office, that "God gave His only-begotten Son Jesus Christ to suffer death upon the Cross for our redemption; who made there (by His one oblation of Himself once offered) a full,

perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world," is abundantly borne out by the Holy Scriptures. And whether we take the *Scripture* words already quoted—"propitiation, Atonement, cleansing, ransom, offering, bearing"—as setting forth the deep mystery of the Atonement; or we take the *Church's* words, "sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction," we shall find the same truth underlying the words in either case.

The two words, "propitiation" and "satisfaction," are sufficient for our present purpose. To propitiate means to appease, to make gracious, to put away that which is the cause of offence, *i.e.* sin; while the word "satisfaction" stands to sin as the payment of a debt.

The use of the latter word, as applied to the death of Christ, is said to be due to Tertullian (about A.D. 200), who borrowed it from the Civil Law. S. Anselm (about A.D. 1100) adopted the term and gave it currency, when he laid it down that "either satisfaction or punishment must follow every sin."¹

¹ *Cur Deus homo*, i. 15.

Thus regarding sin as a debt, of which death was the penalty (Matt. vi. 12), Christ's death was the payment of that debt, in full satisfaction for man's sin. For Christ's death being of infinite worth, as the death of the *Son of God*, and being available for us as the death of *our fellow-man*, was a full and entire propitiation and satisfaction for human sin.

And this aspect of Christ's death, as fully satisfying the Divine requirements, is conclusively asserted by the writer to the Hebrews, in the following passages: vii. 26, 27; ix. 11-14, 24-28; x. 10-14.

(b) Christ's offering was also perfect as the offering or oblation of a willing victim. We have enlarged upon this point at an earlier stage, and need only say now that it was the self-oblation of one who had no need to die,—who by His perfect obedience had established His right to live; yet who willingly laid down His life “of Himself,” in obedience to His Father's will (John x. 18). And it is this willingness on His part to die and to give His life as a ransom for His brethren, which was the essence of His

sacrifice (Heb. x. 10), and which made His death an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour (Eph. v. 2).

(c) The offering of Christ was perfect as a sacrifice in our stead because of the intimate connection between Him and us. It was no arbitrary offering of some person or thing external to ourselves. For good or ill He had identified Himself with His brethren; and as second Adam He is the "head of every man" (1 Cor. xi. 3). Humanity, therefore, is not complete without Him; and the connection between Him and us is organic and fundamental, to the satisfying of the conscience (ix. 14). He died, therefore, not only vicariously, "for us" (2 Cor. v. 21),¹ but also as our representative. And it is no legal fiction, but an actual truth, to say that when He, the Representative Man, died we died in Him, and can claim His death on our behalf. And in the Sacrament of Baptism we put forth our claim, and have our share in His death made

¹ ὑπέρ, on our behalf; not ἀντί, instead of; cf. Heb. vi. 20; ix. 24.

over to us. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him, by baptism, into death" (Rom. vi. 3, 4). And while Christ died for all and gave Himself for all, that all who will may have the benefit, and so became "the Saviour of all men;" yet because there is needed the personal acceptance and appropriation of these benefits by personal faith and the use of the appointed sacraments in His Church, this Salvation only becomes effective and efficient in "them that believe" (1 Tim. iv. 10; John iii. 16; Mark xvi. 16).

"We, one and all, of Him possess'd,
Are with exceeding treasure blest;
For all He did, and all He bare,
He gives us as our own to share."

Thus does Christ's death contain in it *all* the elements of a perfect Sacrifice.

V

AND now, having considered what Christ's death is in itself, as a perfect Sacrifice and Atonement for the sins of men, let us inquire what are its results? What are the benefits which accrue to us thereby? To what ends and purposes did Christ do and suffer all this for men? The simplest answer would be that it was for our salvation. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. i. 15). "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv. 12). But Salvation is a thing of many parts, and may conveniently be considered under the three heads of Redemption, Reconciliation, and Restoration.

(a) REDEMPTION.—"Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy Blood"

(Rev. v. 9). This is the Atonement in its strictest sense. It is the work of God alone. It is provided by the love of God, and wrought out in the life and death of Jesus Christ. "We joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the Atonement" (Rom. v. 11). This is the only place in the N.T. where the word Atonement is used. It is borrowed from the O.T., where it is largely used in connection with the old sacrifices. In innumerable passages they are spoken of as sacrifices of Atonement, or sacrifices to make Atonement. This Atonement was strictly the covering or putting out of sight of sin. Under the first dispensation God covenanted to pass over sin, to wink at it (Acts xvii. 30), and not to impute it, or lay it to their charge, under certain conditions. These conditions were fulfilled by the offering of the sin-offering, which consisted chiefly of two parts, the slaying or death of the victim, and the offering or presenting of its blood. "The life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it you upon the altar to make an atonement

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for your souls : for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul " (Lev. xvii. 11). It is evident that not the shedding of the blood only, but its coming up, or presenting before God also, upon the altar, was necessary for acceptance. The order was, that the sinner first identified himself, in a figure, with the victim, by laying his hand upon its head, and confessing over it his sin. It was thus made, as far as possible, and thus regarded as his substitute, a representative of himself, a vicarious offering.

It was then slain (Lev. iv. 29) by the offerer, and became his sin-offering. Then the priest at once caught the blood, and offered it (warm, quick, and living), at the altar on his behalf (Lev. iv. 6, etc.) as a covering for his sin. Thus life through death is the idea of the sin-offering.

So Christ died that we might live. " And He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but for the sins of the whole world " (1 John ii. 2). Only there is this difference between what Christ's sacrifice has done, and what the sacrifices of the law

accomplished, that while they gained the passing over and covering up of sin for a time, His sacrifice has *put away sin*, has made an end of it (Dan. ix. 24), and made it as though it had not been. "Now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to *put away sin* by the sacrifice of Himself: and unto them that look for Him, shall He appear the second time without sin (*i.e.* a sin-offering) unto Salvation" (Heb. ix. 26-28).

Here was the true sacrifice, of which other sacrifices were only the types and shadows. No other sacrifice had been sufficient. The sacrifices of the Law had failed, because of the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. "For those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually, could never make the comers thereunto perfect; else they would have ceased to be offered" (Heb. x. 1, 2). But no sacrifice which man could offer could avail to make the real atonement which sin needed, so as "to put it away," and make God and man "at-one" together.

Man, oppressed with the sense of his own guilt and feeling his own responsibility, had

ever been seeking to do what he could to put away his sin. He had asked, in the words of the prophet, "Wherewith shall I come to serve the Lord? Shall I come with burnt-offerings and calves of a year old? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression?" (Micah vi. 6). And he had to learn the lesson that no man may deliver his brother, nor make agreement unto God for him; for it cost more to redeem their souls (Ps. xlix. 7). Nor would mere penitence for the past, or amendment for the future, avail to undo the sins already committed. For when we have done all that is commanded we are unprofitable servants; we have only done that which was our duty to do, and have no superfluous merits which can cover or atone for the sins of the past (Luke xvii. 10). Then it was that Christ Jesus undertook for us; and out of His abundant merits did for us what we could not do for ourselves. "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God" (x. 7-10).

And now there is no more offering for sin (x. 18); no more is needed, no more can be

made; "for by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (x. 14). And His one sacrifice, once offered, is a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, as is expressed in the Church's liturgy. And again in the 31st Article of Religion it is declared, "The offering of Christ once made is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin, but that alone."

So is Christ the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world (John i. 29). So was His blood shed for the remission of our sins (Matt. xxvi. 28). So are we redeemed, not with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ (1 Pet. i. 18, 19). So did He give Himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity (Tit. ii. 14), *i.e.* to bring us back to righteousness.

And on the ground of this sacrifice God now ceases to reckon sin against those in whom is found repentance and faith. So sin

is "put away." "For God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself; not imputing their trespasses unto them" (2 Cor. v. 19-21). So is God's honour vindicated, while man is delivered; "that He may be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus" (Rom. iii. 24-26). And this Redemption or Atonement is the first benefit or result of the death of Christ.

(b) RECONCILIATION.—God and man were estranged through sin; and to bring about their reconciliation—the reconciliation of God to man, and of man to God—was the second object of Christ's death. There are those who assert, and assert truly, that God's reconciliation to man is never spoken of in Holy Scripture, but only man's reconciliation to God (*e.g.* Rom. v. 10, 11; 2 Cor. v. 18-20; Eph. ii. 15, 16; Col. i. 20-22).¹

And this is true as regards the present aspect of the case. God is reconciled to the world by the death of His Son, and only waits for each separate soul to be reconciled to Him in return. But when we are con-

¹ Mason, *Faith of the Gospel*, p. 177.

sidering (as in this inquiry) what were the results and consequences, the ends and purposes, to be accomplished by Christ's death, we see that the Atonement was to have a certain effect upon God Himself. The reconciliation that was needed was a mutual reconciliation. It has a retrospective as well as a present aspect. It was demanded by the justice of God lest sin should be considered of little moment, and God's willingness to pardon it be reckoned a mere good-natured indulgence. God's hatred of sin is manifested in the greatness of the sacrifice which was required for its Atonement, while God's love to the sinner (in spite of his sin) is seen in that God Himself provided the Atonement. And this is our answer to those who ask, "Why could not God forgive without a sacrifice?"

Furthermore, it is evident that the word "reconciliation" means the re-establishing of friendly relations which have been broken off, without regarding on which side the offence has been; and there must always be two sides to a reconciliation. The offender

and the offended each needs to be reconciled to the other. In Matt. v. 24 it is the one who has offended who is bidden to be reconciled; but in the interpretation of the passage, God is evidently the one who is meant as the "Adversary"; and if so, He also is one who needs to be reconciled.

At any rate, in Eph. ii. 14-16, Christ is said to have made peace by the blood of His Cross, and to have slain the enmity thereby. And while this refers primarily to the reconciliation of Jew and Gentile, in one all-embracing Catholic Church, it probably has a wider meaning also.¹

Therefore, says one, "It is plain that the reconciliation which was needed was a mutual reconciliation of God to man, as well as of man to God."²

Sin had set up barriers between God and man. The Prodigal was self-exiled in the far country, and was in his Father's sight as dead. He needed to come to himself, to return, and to be reconciled. And while the

¹ Cf. Sadler, *St. Mark*, p. 150.

² *Church Quarterly*, No. 95, p. 154.

Father's love waited to welcome the wanderer, it was one who knew what the Father's love was, who was drawn by it. He was already a Son, within the terms of a Covenant, although a wanderer. For him the sacrifice which his sin needed had already been offered. It was one who knew that God so loved the world, that He had already given His only-begotten Son for its salvation, who was drawn by that knowledge to be reconciled to his Father. His own words show it. "I will arise and go to my Father," not to one who is to be, after reconciliation, "my Father," but who is such now. In other words, *the Cross of Christ, which had slain the enmity, is to be understood as underlying the parable.* The Father is reconciled; but by what means? By the death of His Son. It only remains for the prodigal to realise this truth, that by his penitence he may put himself into line with the Cross, in order that the reconciliation may be *mutual*, and may receive its seal in the kiss of peace. But this does not deny that sin was an objective barrier, which had to be removed, and that

it needed no less than the Cross of Christ to take it away. Yet this very parable has been used to show that man's sin does not need an expiatory sacrifice.¹ We have, however, the authority of our Church for saying that "Christ truly suffered, was crucified, dead and buried, *to reconcile His Father to us*, and to be a Sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for all actual sins of men."²

(c) RESTORATION.—Christ's death was to perfect our salvation by opening the kingdom of Heaven to us, and making us fit to enter therein. In other words, it includes our sanctification among the objects which were to be obtained. His purpose was to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and to bring many sons unto glory (ii. 10); and as our forerunner He has already entered into the heavenly places (vi. 20); and entered there "for us,"—not instead of us, but on our behalf, as our representative, that being accepted in Him, we may follow in due time.

¹ Archdeacon Wilson, *Hulsean Lecture*, pp. 74, 79–99.

² *Articles of Religion*, ii.

For the purpose of Christ's death is subjective as well as objective ; the Cross of Christ is not only to work for us, but also to work in us. The prophet had already foretold it who said, " They shall look on Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him " (Zech. xii. 10). And our Lord Himself said, " I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me"—*men of all nations*, mankind in general and without distinction, but *not all individuals* (John xii. 32). And while reconciliation means, first of all, forgiveness of sins and deliverance from wrath, it includes also change of heart (2 Cor. v. 20, 21). He died, that we might live ; that we might come unto Him and have life. " For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled unto God by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by His life " (Rom. v. 10).

(d) The subjective view of the Atonement,¹ which sets forth that the sufferings and death of Christ were only needed as an incitement to love, and to bring about a change of

¹ See Dr. M'Leod Campbell, pp. 225-6, 331-2, etc.

heart in man, is wholly unsatisfactory if taken apart from the objective view, as already stated. Each side of the truth has its place, and we cannot hold the faith in its just proportions if we forget either. And however attractive the subjective view may be in itself to many minds, the one fatal objection to it is that it does not meet the facts of the case. It does not meet the O.T. anticipations of the Sacrifice of Christ; it disregards our Lord's own statements about His death; and it sets aside the weightier parts of the Apostolic teaching.

Nevertheless, the truth remains that God does require "the Amen of the individual" in confirmation of that which has been done on his behalf by Christ, and this Amen is his saving faith; and God does require in us an increasing righteousness, an ever-striving, advancing, and growing likeness to Him "by whose stripes we are healed."

"Our share in the atonement, then, is not merely passive.¹ It consists in the acceptance of God's forgiveness in Christ,

¹ *Lux Mundi*, pp. 306, 307.

our self-identification with Christ's atoning attitude, and then the working out, by the power of His life bestowed upon us, of all the consequences of forgiveness — in the transformation of character, in the imitation of Christ's perfect obedience to the law of righteousness, and in the gradual sanctification of body, soul, and spirit, by the grace which enables us to 'suffer with Him.'” And His name was called 'Jesus,' because He should save His people *from* their sins (Matt. i. 21). And as many as receive Him, to them He gives power to become “the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name” (John i. 12).

“Thanks be unto God: for His unspeakable gift.”

VI

THERE is one feature of the Atonement which we have not sufficiently enlarged upon, but which holds an important position in the Epistle to the Hebrews. It is found in those passages which tell of Christ's entrance into the holy place of heaven with His own blood—His own sacrifice—"now to appear in the presence of God for us" (ix. 11, 12, 24 ; xii. 24).

We have said already that in the Levitical sacrifices the sin-offering for Atonement consisted chiefly of two parts—the slaying or death of the victim, and the offering or presenting of the blood by the priest, in the sanctuary.

So, also, in the great Antitype these two divisions have their place, as parts of the one great Sacrifice ;—the first part consummated on Calvary, when Jesus said, "It is

finished," and the second part never finished, but ever being transacted in the courts of Heaven. For Christ's Sacrifice was *not completed* by His death on Calvary, but by carrying the token of His death into the highest heavens, and there, as "the Lamb that had been slain," appearing as our advocate with the Father, to plead that "finished" death, "by which alone we obtain remission of our sins, and are made partakers of the kingdom of Heaven."¹

And this action, once begun, is ever continued by virtue of His abiding priesthood, so that "He *is* the propitiation for our sins" (1 John ii. 1), and "the Lamb of God, which *taketh* away the sins of the world" (John i. 29), by His ever-continued action on our behalf.

And the importance of this aspect of the Atonement is clearly seen when we come to ask, What is the relation which exists (if any) between the sacrifice of Calvary and the Sacrament of the Altar? In what sense is the one "a remembrance" of the other? (Luke xxii. 19).

¹ Exhortation in Communion Office.

It was a mediæval error which taught that Christ suffered on the Cross for original sins, and instituted the Sacrament of the Altar for actual sins. And the words of our Second Article of Religion are directed against this error — where it is said that “Christ truly suffered to . . . be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for all actual sins of men.” And again, “Christ has instituted and ordained holy mysteries, as pledges of His love, and for a continual remembrance of His death, to our great and endless comfort.”¹

The truth then is, that the Sacrament of the Altar can only in a secondary sense be put in line with what Christ did for us once for all upon the Cross, but with what He is doing for us continually in Heaven; it is a continual *pleading of the sacrifice* once finished in act, but ever living in operation and efficacy; but in no sense is it a repetition or addition to it.

And the more we know of our own sins and shortcomings, the more we know our

¹ Exhortation in Communion Office.

need of that Sacrifice which atones for sin. And coming to the Holy Communion is our acknowledgment of this; for it means that we come together to plead that Sacrifice before God "in remembrance" of Him, and to make Him our refuge.

" Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Thy Cross I cling."

It is the first meaning and purpose of Holy Communion, according to the Lord's own command, "Do this, in remembrance of Me." And how glad should we be at all times that we have that Sacrifice to flee unto! how glad to plead its merits, and seek its protection!

" For lo! between our sins and their reward,
We set the Passion of Thy Son, our Lord."

VII

IT is now only necessary to consider a few of the objections which have been made to the doctrine of the Atonement, and the answers which they seem to demand; and most of these objections will be found, on examination, to arise from ignorance or forgetfulness of other parts of the Catholic Faith; for the doctrine of the Atonement can only be saved from misunderstanding when it is taken in its relation to the rest of the Christian Faith, of which it forms a part.

(a) We need to guard against the error which has gathered round the word "propitiation,"—the error of thinking that there is any conflict between the will of the Father and the will of the Son, or between the love of the one and the love of the other; as if the Father was all anger and the Son all love, and that we had to be saved from the

anger of the Father by the voluntary interposition of the Son. The suggestion of two wills is contradictory to the truth of the "one substance" in the Godhead. The will of the Father was ever the will of the Son likewise (Matt. xxvi. 39; John v. 19); and the love of the Father, the love of the Son likewise (John xvi. 27). It was love which moved the Father to give His only-begotten Son (John iii. 16), as it was love which moved the Son to give Himself (Gal. ii. 20; Eph. v. 2). "For God commendeth *His* love towards us, that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Rom. v. 8). And it was equally "the wrath of the Lamb" against sin, as the wrath of the Father, which upheld Christ in His conflict with sin, and sent Him forth to war against it (Isa. lxiii. 3-5; Rev. vi. 16). While, therefore, the old heathen idea of propitiation was that of appeasing an angry god, who was resentful, passionate, and cruel, such ideas can have no place in Christian thought. God's wrath against sin is always represented as righteous, and never as resentful or passionate; and

through the Sacrifice of the Cross God is revealed as just and the Justifier at the same time,—as treating sinful men as the children of His love in spite of their sins,—which without that Sacrifice would not have been possible.

(*b*) The same remarks cover the objection of those who regard the Atonement as a substitution of the innocent for the guilty in a sense that is revolting to our ideas of justice and righteousness. But when we remember that the Lord not only laid on Him the iniquity of us all, but that He Himself took our sins, and bore them of His own free will, in His own body on the tree, this objection falls. And why should we deny to Him this heroic self-sacrifice on behalf of those who had been created in His own image, and were the objects of His love, when we allow it and admire it in others every day. Vicarious suffering and sacrifice is no such uncommon thing that it need provoke our surprise. It is everywhere where love is. And may not God Himself give us the highest example of it? “For herein is love,

not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and gave His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John iv. 10). And "Lo, I come to do Thy will," was the ready response (Heb. x. 9).

(c) Why could not God forgive sin without a sacrifice? Are not *we* bidden to forgive freely, and without compensation or redress? Why then did God demand a sacrifice? I will answer in the words of a great theologian: "Without a satisfaction such as this, the eternal interests of that righteousness whereof God is the upholder in His own moral universe would not have permitted Him to be, as He now is, the passer-by of transgression, the justifier and acceptor of the ungodly." The justice of God demanded the sacrifice (else how should God judge the world?), while the love of God provided it. Had God passed over sin, without any satisfaction, it would have been thought that sin was a light matter, and that in spite of all that is said in condemnation of it God was easy, good-natured, and indulgent, and did

¹ Archbishop Trench, *Abbey Sermons*, p. 176.

not care much about it. But all this is altered when we see the magnitude of the sacrifice which God Himself made in order to destroy sin, and save the sinner (2 Cor. v. 21).

And our free forgiveness of our fellow-sinners is to be the fruit of God's grace and mercy in forgiving us. "Freely ye have received, freely give" (Matt. x. 8). "And if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (1 John iv. 2).

(*d*) What gave the death of Jesus Christ its propitiatory value? What was the essence of the Atonement? Was it the sufferings or the death of Christ?

St. Bernard says, "Not His death, but His willing acceptance of death, was pleasing to God." And no doubt the value and perfection of our Lord's sacrifice is bound up with His willingness to die. "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." "By the which will we are sanctified" (Heb. x. 9, 10). "An offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour" (Eph. v. 2). For as the essence of sin had been rebellion against God's will, so the essence of obedience was submission to

God's will, even at the cost of suffering, and a willing acceptance of that suffering as the due reward of iniquity. Yet not suffering but death is the penalty of sin (Gen. ii. 17; Ezek. xviii. 20). It was necessary, therefore, not only that Christ should suffer as the extreme trial of His obedience, but also that His sufferings should end in death. The slaying of the victim had a special significance in the old sacrifice, for "without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. ix. 22). And in the significant language of Holy Scripture, "Christ tasted death for every man" (Heb. ii. 9). And whatever form that death took, or whatever virtue was imparted to it by Christ's voluntary submission to it, it is evident that *death itself* was the appointed penalty. "Christ *died* for us" (Rom. v. 8). Therefore St. Bernard's saying, however true as far as it goes, does not meet the whole necessity of the case. And although there is nothing pleasing to God in death itself, or in suffering, for they are both repugnant to a God of life, and a God of love, and He who willeth not the death of a sinner cannot will the death of

the righteous ; yet there is something satisfying and compensating to the law of righteousness (which has been broken) in such a death, and therefore something propitiating in it.

(e) And if we ask further, How can the death of one satisfy for all, and how can it be for us? we have to remember that Christ as man is one of the race. He suffers as man for man, and as one of us He suffers for us. Yet this is not all. He is more than one of us ; He is the second Adam, a new head of the race—(see Rom. v. 18, 19). He is the equal of the Father, a Divine person. And it is as a Divine Person that He is able to do what none other could do. And if the Son of God could submit to death at all, must it not be that mighty results must follow? Therefore, though we could believe it of no other, we can believe it of Him, that by His death He has redeemed the world. For, says our greatest theologian, “It was the Son of God that was born, the Son of God that was baptized, the Son of God condemned, the Son of God, and no other person, crucified ;

which one only point of Christian belief, *the infinite worth of the Son of God*, is the very ground of all things believed concerning life and salvation, by that which Christ either did or suffered as man in our behalf.”¹

Therefore, while speculation doubts, and even Faith cannot explain how it can be, yet the heart that feels the burden of sin hails with adoring thankfulness what God has done. It believes that in the death of Christ is provided a ransom which is vicarious, propitiatory, atoning, reconciling, and eternally sufficient for all men, if they repent and believe. It therefore exclaims with the apostle, “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.” “He loved me and gave Himself for me.” And thus believing, he has peace with God through Jesus Christ.

To sum up, then, we thank God that what we could not do for ourselves He has done for us. That He has made for us the way of Salvation; that the cross of Christ has been set up, and the simple statement of its purpose and its meaning still draws the

¹ Hooker, Book v., chap. 52.

humble heart towards it. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." It is still true, for its superscription, written in shining letters, is "God is Love." "The Son of God loved me." It tells of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. And what others vainly seek after the Christian has found. He no longer says in his perplexity, "Wherewith shall I come to serve the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?" God Himself has shown him the way and provided for his need, and what God has provided he by faith accepts. For the promise is, "He that *believeth* and is *baptized* shall be saved," not he that understands or explains it; but simply he that believes it.

And thus believing, the Christian works now *from* the Cross, and no longer *to* the Cross. He is justified by Faith, and not by the works of the law; and he knows and seeks no other Name by which he may be saved. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever *believeth* in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16).

“And He is able to save to the uttermost *all* that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.” (Heb. vii. 25).

And what does the simple soul need more, except to say this prayer in all sincerity and truth, “Lord, I believe ; help Thou mine unbelief.” “O Lord, in Thee have I trusted, let me never be confounded.”

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